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## RESEARCH

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### INTERACTIVE MARINE EDUCATION

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Mentor: Kevin Izumi  
Aquarium System and Ponds Supervisor

MOP Advisor: Frank Stanton, Leeward Community College

During the course of a year I have worked for Aquarium System and Ponds Company in the fishponds at the Ihilani Resort and Spa and have learned various maintenance duties to ensure the health and aesthetics of the fishponds within the resort. I have had the opportunity to care for and work with native fish, brown stingrays, and scalloped hammerhead sharks. I was also responsible for learning how to conduct the educational fish-feeding program that the resort offers to their guest. Not only does this program educate people about native fish, but also to be aware of the growing problems of the marine environment around our islands. This internship has allowed me to learn what is required to maintain captive marine organisms in large ponds and how to interact with the public to provide them with a safe, entertaining and educational experience.

**TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL**  
**MARINE OPTION PROGRAM**  
**STUDENT SYMPOSIUM**

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## Semester Reflection on my MOP skill project

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This semester was very interesting because I was fortunate to be able to work for a class credit. My internship was everything that I had expected of it, but it has also brought me a long way. I started off working as just another worker, cleaning up after the fish. But through out this semester, I have experienced more things that I thought I would during my employment with Aquarium Systems and Ponds.

I thought that this would be the perfect semester to do my skills project because I was finally settled enough with the company to do work and report on it. I also felt comfortable with the fact that I could do my job and have enough time to complete my project on time. But as the semester went on, the job started to get complicated. My supervisor Melanie quit, leaving my coworkers and I in the dark about many issues on how to run a smooth operation. This gave me the opportunity to communicate more with Kevin, the owner of the company.

Besides having Melanie leaving the company, the hotel decided to do some renovations to the building that would affect the animals. So I had the chance to learn more about the sting rays and sharks while I worked with the team to remove the animals. I have learned many things on how to accommodate the animals and to their needs. I remember watching the stingrays in their temporary home and how their behavior drastically changed. They didn't want to eat or swim around much. I sat there for hours trying to think of what the problem was and how I could possible fix it. I learned how to describe unusual behaviors to Kevin and helped him problem solve on how to fix it. Within the course of a week of observation, I have learned that the rays weren't active because of the lack of oxygen in the water. So I learned how to set up a water pump and get some oxygen into the water for the rays.

That was just one special situation that happened within the semester. Others would include accommodating hotel guest who weren't happy, and continuously answering similar questions that people have about the "Crocodile Hunter." But I've gained more knowledge and grew a bit more professional with each new experience with

the company. I have to also admit that dealing with each situation was very exhausting and caused me to push my project on the side for a while.

A bit later in the semester was when I truly got to focus on working on my MOP skills project. I did start just a bit later than I expected to. But it was worth the wait because I had new experiences and knowledge to include in my project. Now I can see that this experience was more than just meeting the deadline to get a grade for the semester. With this push to learn and experience new things I have been able to accomplish more than just a grade, I have had a chance to truly learn about the company first hand and get all of my questions answered.

Now that this section is over, I will move on to better things. I have recently been offered a chance to hire people my very own coworkers. I was shocked because Kevin has told me that he saw an interest and desire in me that he hasn't seen in any of our other workers. Now he wants me to go out and find people who might have the similar outlook as I do. So now I can focus on helping other MOP students on finding a job and maybe a possible intern skills project.

I am glad that I took up the opportunity to pursue this certificate. I have entered college with no idea on what I could possibly be. But with the help of MOP I have been able to find a job and use it to gain my certificate. I am not definitely sure if I am going to become a marine biologist or anything close to that. I have found a niche that I could fill that doesn't keep me locked up in an office somewhere. I get to spend my time out in the field teaching people and learning as I go. But I know that I wouldn't have gotten this far without the help of MOP.